



The Explorer

The Official Newsletter of the Lewis & Clark Conservation District

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East Helena High begins Career Technical Ed program!!!

We at the Conservation District and the Helena NRCS Field Office are excited to be participating in the planning stages for the new CTE (Career and Technical Education) meetings for the new high school in East Helena. The Local Advisory Committee has met twice now and from what we hear from the school district, there are already over 20 students registered for the ag classes offered to incoming freshmen for the 2020 school year. There will be an FFA Chapter associated with this program, the only one in Lewis & Clark County!

The CTE Local Advisory Council will also be working with the other branches of Career Technical Education including Family Consumer Sciences, Industrial Trades and Technology and Business Education.

We anticipate great things from the incoming Freshman Class when they graduate in 2024! Congratulations to East Helena Schools!

Bob Bushnell Day

This is long past due, but last November 2, the Lewis and Clark County Commissioners proclaimed November 2, 2018 to be Bob Bushnell Day in the County.

Bob served on the Conservation District board for many years, taking over from Bob Orr in 2000, and retired from the Conservation District in 2016. Bob Bushnell Day was declared because of Bob's years of effort fighting invasive species in Lewis & Clark County.



Photo Credit to Roger Dey, Blackfoot Valley Dispatch

As would be expected from Bob, he shared credit with the large crew of people he has worked with over the years starting with the Ponderosa Snow Warriors back in 1996 when they would go out and spray the ATV and snowmobile trails. Through grants and volunteer work, they've been at it for more than 20 years now.

In addition to his work with the Ponderosa Snow Warriors and the Lewis & Clark Conservation District, Bob served on the Lewis & Clark County Weed Board for 18 years. From 2004 to 2010 Bob also served on the state Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council which oversees the Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund Grant program.

Our congratulations to Bob on this recognition, and our thanks for his many years of hard work!

Montana Focused Conservation

Article provided by NRCS

Montana NRCS in partnership with our Conservation Districts have always strived to assist private landowners engage in voluntary conservation thru comprehensive planning, cooperation and partnerships, while working together to provide a high level of customer service.

Starting in fiscal year (FY19), Montana NRCS will begin the transition to a focused approach in implementing conservation, referred to as Montana Focused Conservation (MFC). We will focus our investments in targeted areas to achieve clearly defined natural resource outcomes as identified by you and our other local partners through the locally-led process.

The goal of Montana Focused Conservation is to enhance our ability to solve high priority natural resource concerns in a focused and strategic manner. The Montana Focused Conservation effort will employ Long range Planning and a targeted approach using Targeted Implementation Plans (TIPs) to define and address high priority natural

resource concerns. A Targeted Implementation Plan includes a detailed description of a specific natural resource issue that has been identified through a locally led grass roots process at the county level. The TIP also includes locally driven solutions to address the stated resource concern coupled with a timeline and project funding needs. Each Targeted Implementation Plan will have a "line of sight" back to the Long-Range Plan and provide the necessary detail of how a resource concern will be addressed. Local input will be more important than ever, and we will need the help of anyone interested in conservation to ensure it happens in an effective and timely manner. This will be our source of information for setting local priorities and developing Targeted Implementation Plans. NRCS looks forward the upcoming meetings and how we as an agency that help address the priority resource concerns of the Lewis & Clark County.

Montana Focused Conservation-A District Perspective

Montana Focused Conservation; the newest buzzword, along with "moving the needle", "random acts of conservation", "targeted investment", coming to a Field Office near you in Montana.

The CD has been working hard to determine how this will affect our traditional customers, agricultural landowners. The biggest change is that even though landowners will still be able to submit applications for EQIP, funds will only be available in a county under that program in targeted or focused fund pools. The so-called "shotgun" approach will no longer be used.

For example, let's say that you as a landowner would like to do a cross-fence in your grazing pasture, along with some off-stream livestock water. You can still come into the NRCS Field Office and put in an application for EQIP cost share. If your proposed project is not within an identified and funded Targeted Implementation Plan, or if it doesn't fit in one of the other specialized fund pools, then you will have to wait. If at some point the area that you are in falls into a TIP and that TIP is targeting your resource concern, there is a possibility that your project will then be considered. TIPS are projected to last for 2-5 years. You may still be able to receive Technical Assistance if the office is able to get to you.

The Conservation District Board realizes that when landowners walk in the door at the Field Office with a need that they would like to address on their property, it is certainly not a random act of conservation. It's a very real concern that they would like to address and that would make their ag operation run more effectively.

While the Conservation District recognizes that the focused or targeted approach works very well, such as in the Capital 360 Forestry project and the Joint Chiefs Forestry Project, we believe that tying up **all** EQIP funding in those types of projects is "greater good" conservation. Small projects mean a lot to landowners. Small projects build relationships between somewhat ephemeral employees at the NRCS Field Office and landowners, some of whom have had families in ag for many generations.

Locally led planning sessions will be important. They will also be open to all. If landowners/managers do not provide input on their resource priorities, special interest groups and government groups will do it for them. We as a Conservation District would strongly encourage you to provide feedback, either at one of the 4 meetings that we have scheduled (see insert) or by returning the survey (back of the insert) to the Conservation District office.

In the meantime, as the Field Office compiles feedback into a Long-Range Plan for the themselves, the Conservation District will be utilizing the same information to adjust our annual plan of operations and search for funding sources that aren't tied to any of NRCS' programs. There may be a way that we can beef up our cost share program to address needs that are outside the NRCS defined "TIPs".

If you have any questions, please give us a call at 406-449-5000 ext. 5 or email us at lccd@mt.net.

USDA Farm Service Agency Reminder to Montana Livestock Producers

(Helena, Montana), March 18, 2019 – As winter continues and the 2019 calving season is underway, the USDA Farm Service Agency reminds Montana livestock producers about the importance of record keeping and reporting your livestock death losses to FSA within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent.

A Notice of Loss can be filed with FSA via email, phone, fax or office visit.

For more information on the Livestock Indemnity Program and other disaster programs, contact your local FSA office today at (406) 449-5000 Extension 2 and 790 Colleen Street in Helena. Visit online at www.farmers.gov/recover.

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Contents:	Pg.
CTE Classes East Helena	1
Bob Bushnell Day	1
Changes in NRCS Funding	2-3
FSA News	3

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